

Killingly Board of Education

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July 25, 2019

Dear KPS Community,

The Killingly School District is committed to the success of every student in each of our schools. The diversity of our student body, our staff, and our community is a strength of this district that should be fostered. Educational equity benefits all students and our entire community. We believe that every student deserves a respectful learning environment in which their cultural, racial and ethnic diversity is valued and contributes to successful academic outcomes. Learning and work environments are enriched and improved by the contributions, perspectives, and very presence of diverse participants.

At the request of community members and student leaders at Killingly High School, the Killingly Board of Education revisited an ongoing issue relating to the use of Native American imagery as a mascot and using “Redmen” as a reference to our athletes. Although, it was never the intention of the district to be disrespectful to Native American culture, we believe it is time to retire the current KHS mascot and begin a new tradition for KHS.

In 2005, the American Psychological Association called for the immediate retirement of all American Indian mascots, symbols, images and personalities stating, “The use of American Indian mascots as symbols in schools and university athletic programs is particularly troubling because schools are places of learning.” This month, Killingly Public Schools received communications from the Nipmuc Tribal Nation, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, and the Mohegan Youth Council, requesting that we not use Native American imagery as a mascot. This public confirmation from our Native American neighbors endorses the Board’s motion to change our mascot.

The Board understands that this is a very personal topic for our alumni and community. We would like to provide the community an opportunity to make suggestions for our new mascot. The Superintendent of Schools will collaborate with students, faculty, and families to begin the process of identifying a new name for a high school mascot. Community input is important and we are encouraging our community to share their ideas in an online survey, which can be accessed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TJFVPWW>.

It is not our intention to dismiss Killingly’s history and traditions, but to promote an inclusive and unifying environment. It is our belief that a mascot should be a unifying symbol for all our students!

Sincerely,

John Burns

Board of Education Chairman